

phorus is wet. All our materials are mixed wet, and the only danger from vestas is while they are wet. After the matches are dried there is no danger, and the girls never touch the matches or see them until they are dry. The process of match-manufacture is this: In the main building the taper is made on drums; we make about fifty miles at a time, and there is no danger in that. It is then taken to machines, where the rolls of taper are taken from the rollers, and put into frames, and cut into lengths, and the frame is filled up, preparatory to dipping. A match-factory is supposed to be dirty work, but it is clean work, and after the frames are filled the dipping is done out in the yard. The drying-rooms are away from the main building.

659. The matches are not dipped by the girls themselves?—They are dipped in frames, in a yard covered with a roof and otherwise open, and out in the open air, by a dipper—a man. When he has dipped them they are carried into the drying-rooms, which are small rooms, so that in case of a fire only one room would take fire at a time. The fumes cannot get into the room where the girls are employed, and the girls have nothing to do with the phosphorus-department process. In the present factory the girls are in an upper room, and the frames travel across the yard to go to them.

660. Would it be possible for the Commission to see your factory?—I should be very pleased for the Commission to see the factory, but I would like you to see the new factory.

661. *Mr. Tanner.*] The Commission would like to see both, and the conditions under which the factory works?—I could have brought the plans of the Melbourne factory for the information of the Commission; but I could give you an opportunity of seeing the factory if you wish. I might add that the girls do not get the matches from the drying-room until they are dried. Then there is no escape of phosphorus. They do the boxing of the dried matches.

662. *The Chairman.*] And the cutting into lengths will be done by machinery?—That is done before they are dipped, during the filling into frames. The girls' work consists in taper-making, filling into frames, and the boxing.

663. Under the conditions of the present factory in Wellington, which are not what you could desire, and which you intend to improve, there has been no illness?—Not the slightest.

664. *Mr. Tanner.*] Why have so many girls left?—Some were not content with the amount of wages they first earned. They did not stick to the work as well as they did in Melbourne. We have fifty-five hands there, and they are a superior class of girls; and out of sixty girls originally employed only five have left. They earn better wages than they do here under the same conditions.

665. *The Chairman.*] I presume the materials used here are imported from Home?—At present all are imported, but if I could get the stearine locally, and of a suitable quality, I would use it. Stearine is the chief material, and the stearine made here for candles is not good enough for matches. We require a far better quality. We buy it at 4½d. per pound in London, and pay a duty of 1½d. per pound. The phosphorus comes in free in a crude state: it is manufactured in England and France. The wick is free of duty, and is imported.

666. Could it be made here?—No; you are not in a position to manufacture cotton wick in the colony. We also import glue, which bears a duty of 1½d. per pound.

667. Is that made in the colony?—I suppose it is, but I have not made any inquiries about glue. I am buying my stearine and glue in Melbourne, and in all probability I shall buy my glue here. We use paraffin wax. The boxes are imported. The plaid vesta-boxes come in free of duty.

668. Is there any possibility of manufacturing them here?—I do not think so; you have not a manufactory here of straw-board, of which the plaid boxes are made. That is the cheapest board manufactured, and you have a duty against it. We buy straw-boards in London at £5 16s. per ton, and the duty is £4.

669. Are the boxes made by machinery?—Yes, we employ 150 hands making boxes in London; and I am sure there is no possibility of getting them made here. The tin boxes are, of course, imported, and we pay a duty of 25 per cent., and the same freight as though they were full of matches, and also on the empty plaid boxes.

670. Are the tin-boxes brought out complete or in sections?—Complete, because the whole process of cutting the sections and folding them is really making the boxes.

*Witness:* Is the Commission under the impression that the present factory is in any way unhealthy; because, if so, that is not the case, of which you could judge for yourselves.

671. *The Chairman.*] We have not asked any question regarding any special unhealthiness in yours or any particular factory; but we wanted to have your expert evidence as to the truth or otherwise of what must be known to everybody in the world—that there have been allegations as to the extraordinary unhealthiness of this particular industry?—You can take it from me that those allegations are grossly exaggerated. In London there has been an outcry, making out that the match-factories were very unhealthy, and the Home Secretary investigated; but it was distinctly proved that it is nothing of the kind. There have been one or two cases, not perhaps three cases in the last five years, at Messrs. Bryant and May's factory, on account of conditions which should not have existed. They have been altered since. It has not been proved that there has been another case in England for years.

672. Given proper conditions, the manufacture can be carried on without danger?—I assure you most decidedly that is the case. The only employé likely to suffer in any degree is the dipper; if he keeps his hands clean, and does not eat his food with dirty hands, he cannot receive any injury. We impress that particularly upon him, giving him every facility to keep himself clean, and insisting that he shall do so.

673. *Mr. Hutchison.*] Do I understand, Mr. Bell, that if a girl is in the factory for three months her wages will rise beyond 6s.?—They ought to. It is all piecework, and as soon as they can earn more they get it. There is a great difference between girls. Some girls pick up the work more